

This example illustrates the hazards of mobbing, and indicates that snakes may take advantage of mobbing birds (which presumably interact to some extent with, and have to watch each other as well as the predator), by striking at the birds whenever they can. Snakes must infrequently obtain prey in this way. As a possible hunting technique it would appear to be a poor one, as the snake is occasionally pecked and thus could be injured by the mobbing birds (pers. obs.).

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Ficedula species in Ethiopia

The Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* is generally uncommon in eastern Africa. Britton (1980a) stated that it was a regular visitor to parts of western Tanzania, and Vande weghe (1979) has noted it frequently on passage in Rwanda. There are few records, however, from Uganda and Kenya (Britton 1980a, East African Bird Reports for 1980–85 in *Scopus*). The great majority of the East African and Rwandan records refer to the eastern race *semitorquata*. There are also two records of *semitorquata* from northern Somalia (16 August and 1 September 1905, J.S. Ash, pers. comm.) and four from southern Sudan (Nikolaus, in press). Nikolaus (1983) netted a *semitorquata* in early October 1982 near the Sudan Red Sea coast, and Hogg *et al.* (1984) mention an older September occurrence of the species in north-western Sudan. Britton (1980a) pointed out that there were no satisfactory records of the Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* for East Africa, and Pearson (1981) has re-examined two Kenya specimens previously ascribed to this species and concluded that both were *semitorquata*. There are no good records of *hypoleuca* from southern Sudan either (Nikolaus, in press), though this species is said to have occurred in the northern part of the country (Hogg *et al.* 1984) and two were recorded in August from the Red Sea coast (Nikolaus 1987).

In Ethiopia, Urban & Brown (1971) noted that the status of the *Ficedula* species was uncertain, but that *F. a. semitorquata* occurred in highland forests in Eritrea. This was based on Smith's (1957) records between 5 August and late September in woodland above 1200 m. C.S. Clapham also recorded *semitorquata* in Eritrea in 1962 (J.S. Ash, pers. comm.). Elsewhere in Ethiopia, *Ficedula* flycatchers are apparently rare. Among over 56,000 birds ringed from 1969 to 1977, Ash (1977) noted only four 'Pied' Flycatchers. Three of these were recorded by Hugh Pain on the western edge of Addis Ababa during August (Pain 1975, 1976). Unfortunately, no full descriptions were taken, but photographs are available. One of these photographs is certainly of *semitorquata* but the other

two appear to be of species other than *Ficedula*. The fourth bird was caught by me on 6 April 1976 in a patch of woodland by a dry tributary of the Ubela River in lowland Gambela in Gemu Goffa province, near the Sudanese border (Tyler 1976). This bird was ringed, photographed and identified as a female *semitorquata*.

Clearly more data are required to assess the status of *F. a. semitorquata* in Ethiopia, but the Gambela record indicates that it is a spring as well as an autumn passage migrant. There appear to be no satisfactory Ethiopian records of either nominate *albicollis* or *hypoleuca*.

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